REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 6-10, 12-16 and 18 are pending in this application. In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected all of these claims under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over a combination of three references. Specifically, these claims were rejected as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,960,337 (Brewster, et al.) in view of U.S. Patent 6,028,514 (Lemelson, et al.) and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,289,340 (Puram, et al.). It is noted that the previous rejection of the claims over Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. was withdrawn.

Independent Claims 1, 7 and 13 are being amended to better define the subject matters of these claims. Also, new Claims 19-21, which are dependent from Claim 1, are being added to describe preferred features of the invention.

For the reasons set forth below, Claims 1-4, 6-10, 12-16 and 18-21 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. The Examiner is, accordingly, asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-4, 6-10, 12-16 and 18, and to allow these claims and new Claims 19-21.

As explained in detail in the present application, this invention relates to methods and systems for helping people with disabilities. Generally this is done by establishing a network that puts volunteers in contact with the people who have requested help. In this network a first database includes information about people with disabilities, and a second database includes information about the volunteer helpers. To obtain help, a person who has pre-registered, makes a request for help. In response to this request, a matching server obtains information from the first database about the person asking for help, and uses that information to identify a volunteer listed in the second database. The matching server then notifies that volunteer and provides him or her with the information needed to contact and help the person who asked for the help.

10   G:\Ibm\105\13808\AMEND\13808.am6.doc

There are several very important general differences between the present invention and the systems and procedures disclosed in Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. One important difference is that this invention uses volunteers, who may not be busy and are willing to help, while Brewster, et al. does not. Another significant difference is that the present invention is not specifically designed for the purpose of responding to emergency situations, while Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al are.

More specifically, Brewster, et al. describes a procedure in which, after an operator is informed of an emergency event, the operator selects from a group of Emergency Assistance Services (EAS), the EAS who can reach the location of the emergency in the quickest time, and the operator then notifies that selected EAS.

Lemelson, et al. discloses a procedure in which people may be warned of a variety of emergency or dangerous conditions. In the disclosed procedure, a warning device is carried by the person who is to be warned, and this warning device can also be used to monitor for several medical conditions of the wearer.

Because of the above-discussed general differences between this invention and the disclosures of Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al, there also are a number of more specific differences between these prior art systems and the present invention. For instance, one specific, important difference is the use, in the present invention, of a matching server to match the volunteers with people who have requested help.

This matching server performs a number of functions. In particular, the matching server, in response to a request from someone asking for assistance, obtains information about that person from the first database, and uses that information to identify in the second database a volunteer who is willing to help. The matching server then notifies the identified volunteer of

11

G:\fbm\105\13808\AMEND\13808.am6.doc

the request and provides him or her with the information needed to contact the person who asked for assistance.

In the Office Action, the Examiner noted that Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. do not disclose a matching server to use information from first and second databases to match the person making the request with a volunteer. The Examiner argued, however, that Puram does disclose such a matching server.

Puram describes a procedure for matching job candidates to jobs, and Puram discloses in column 3, lines 17-39 that one or more databases may be used in this process.

Applicants respectfully submit that one of ordinary skill in the art of the present invention would not have been led to consider the disclosure of Puram, as the Examiner has done, to modify Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. This is so for several reasons. First, the fields of Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. are very different from the field of Puram. Both Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. expressly relate to responding to emergency situations, such as serious medical conditions. Puram, in contrast, relates to employment procedures. In addition, the procedures of Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. are time critical, while Puram is not.

There is no suggestion in the prior art to use a matching server of the type described in Puram, in any modification of Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. The Examiner is, thus, using the teaching of the present invention in hindsight to piece together bits and pieces of the cited references, and then to modify those bits and pieces in order to reject the present application.

In addition, even if one of ordinary skill in the art were to use the matching server of Puram in the combination of Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al, the resulting system would still be very different from the present invention. This is because Puram does not suggest using a matching server to match data from two different databases of the type used in the present

12   G:\Ibm\105\13808\AMEND\13808.am6.doc

invention - that is, to take data from one database and use that data to identify a volunteer in the second database.

Another important feature of the present invention that is not disclosed or suggested in any of the references is that the matching server, after a volunteer is identified, notifies the volunteer of the match.

In the Office Action, an analogizing the matching server of Puram to the matching server of this invention, the Examiner argued that the employer and job candidate of the Puram disclosure correspond to, respectively, the person making the request for help and the volunteer of the system of the present invention. Significantly, with the matching procedure discussed in Puram, it is the employer (the one seeking help) not the job candidate (the volunteer) that is notified of the match. The procedure of the present invention is just the opposite.

There are further, important differences between the matching server of Puram and the matching server of the preferred embodiment of the present invention. For instance, the preferred embodiment of this invention does not require an exact match like in Puram.

Independent Claims 1, 7 and 13 describe important features of this invention that are not shown in or suggested by the prior art. Specifically, as amended herein, Claims 1, 7 and 13 describe the feature that, after a volunteer is identified, the matching server notifies that volunteer of the request for assistance.

This feature is useful for a number of reasons. For example, if the volunteer is not able to actually assist at the time of the request, it gives the identified volunteer the opportunity to decline the request and to so notify the matching server. This, in turn, enables the matching server to find another volunteer.

G:\Ibm\105\13808\AMEND\13808.am6.doc

Because of the above-discussed differences between Claims 1, 7 and 13 and the prior art, and because of the advantages associated with those differences, these claims patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Claims 2-4, 6 and 19-21 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 1. Also, Claims 8-10 and 12 are dependent from Claim 7 and are allowable therewith; and Claims 14-16 and 18 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 13.

Every effort has been made to place this application in condition for allowance, a notice of which is requested. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicants' Attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is asked to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully Submitted,

John S Sensny
John S. Sensny
Registration No. 28,757
Attorney for Applicants

Scully, Scott, Murphy & Presser
400 Garden City Plaza – Suite 300
Garden City, New York 11530
(516) 742-4343

JSS:jy

14   G:\Ibm\105\13808\AMEND\13808.am6.doc